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Remarks:

The amendments and remarks presented herein are believed to be fully responsive to the Office Action dated September 29, 2004.

Claims 1-44 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 2, 5, 7-14, 16-18, 20, 24, 27-29, 32-34, 36-41, 43 and 44 have been amended as set forth above. The amendments are fully supported in the specification and drawings as originally filed. No new matter has been added.

CLAIM REJECTIONS

Claims 1-44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claims 1, 9, 10, 12-14, 16-19, 24, 27, 28, 33, 34 and 38-40 have been amended to obviate the rejection under §112. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under §112 is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-29 and 33-44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Patrito, U.S. Patent No. 6,176,367. Claims 30-32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Patrito.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and §103(a) for the reasons set forth below.

Applicants have amended claim 1 to clarify that the conveying units are at least one of mechanically connected and electrically connected so that the conveying units are joined as a functional conveyor assembly. Each load-bearing element of at least two laterally spaced-apart load-bearing members of each conveyor unit comprises an endlessly circulating load-bearing belt. The load bearing belt bears the load carriers and is supported on a plurality of spaced apart load-bearing rollers, which are mounted on the load-bearing members with a gap between respective adjacent pairs of the rollers, and which circulate in

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the conveying direction. The gap between the rollers is less than the dimension of a diameter of one of the rollers.

Applicants respectfully submit that Patrito, either alone or in combination with any other reference cited, does not disclose or suggest the conveyor of the present invention, particularly as set forth in independent claim 1, and the claims depending therefrom. Patrito discloses a device or conveyance table for conveying components along an assembly line. The conveyor belts are supported by supporting rollers substantially spaced apart along the table. The belts support the sled of a component as the component is moved along the conveyor table.

Applicants respectfully submit that there is no disclosure or teaching or suggestion in Patrito of any mechanical or electrical connection between a pair of adjacent tables. Also, there is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion in Patrito of load-bearing rollers that support the belts and that are mounted on load-bearing members with a gap between respective adjacent pairs of the rollers, and with the gap between the rollers being small, such as less than the dimension of a diameter of one of the rollers. This is done in the conveyor of the present invention to provide a substantially continuous support along the conveyor to support pallets and the like that may not have sleds extending along the belts. In stark contrast to the claimed present invention, the support rollers of Patrito are spaced substantially apart along the conveyor table to support sled-type components. Moreover, Patrito teaches away from positioning the rollers close together with a small gap between adjacent rollers by teaching that the belts of the Patrito conveyor table are for supporting components that are mounted on such sled-like supports (as shown in Figure 6 of Patrito). Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that Patrito, either alone or in combination with any cited reference, does not disclose, teach or suggest the conveyor of the present invention, particularly as set forth in independent claim 1.

Also, Applicants respectfully submit that Patrito does not disclose, teach or suggest the claimed invention of the dependent claims for all of the reasons set forth above and for at least the additional reasons as set forth below. Particularly, Applicants submit that

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Patrito does not teach or suggest a load-bearing member that is formed from a rolled steel profile or angled sheet metal or from an extruded aluminum profile, such as set forth in claims 3 and 4 of the present application. Also, Applicants submit that Patrito does not teach or suggest a load-bearing member that comprises a load-bearing profile and a bar, such as set forth in claims 5-11 and 41-44, and/or a bar which is positionable in an exchangeable manner on a load-bearing profile and on which the rollers and belt are mounted, such as set forth in claims 5-11 and 44. Moreover, there is no teaching or suggestion in Patrito of having a C-shaped profile and a U-shaped bar, particularly with the U-shaped bar being fastened to the C-shaped profile in the manner set forth in claims 10 and 11. Nor is there any teaching or suggestion in Patrito of closing the C-shaped profile with a covering plate such as set forth in claim 9.

Also, Applicants submit that there is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion in Patrito of controlling multiple integrated conveyor tables, with the control elements of the tables being linked and/or synchronized, as set forth in claims 12-14 of the present application. Moreover, Applicants submit that there is no teaching or suggestion in Patrito of providing three load bearing members and elements along the conveyor, such as set forth in claims 15 and 16. Applicants further submit that there is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion in Patrito of positioning the driving roller such that the top of the driving wheel is arranged in the load-bearing plane of the load bearing rollers, such as is set forth in claims 18-22. Nor is there any teaching or suggestion in Patrito of providing a tension adjustment, particularly such as in the manner set forth in claims 21 and 22. Applicants further submit that Patrito does not teach or suggest providing a dedicated drive station and motor for each load-bearing element, with the motors being synchronized or activated differently, such as set forth in claims 23 and 24 of the present application.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Patrito, either alone or in combination with any other prior art of record, does not disclose, teach or suggest the conveyor of the present invention, particularly as set forth in independent claim 1 and in the claims depending therefrom. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1-44 is respectfully requested.